

# Jewish people were some of area's earliest settlers

Historians identify three separate waves of immigration as the basis for today's American Jewish community.

The first took place in the 17th and 18th centuries as Jews of Spanish origin fled the Inquisition. In the middle of the 19th century, a second wave brought nearly 200,000 Jews from revolution-torn Germany and Central Europe.

The third and, by far largest immigration, took place between 1880 and 1910 as Jews fled the oppressive Czarist Russian government.

Many of the Jews in Northeastern Wisconsin are descendants of those who arrived in the second major immigration.

Large numbers of Jew-

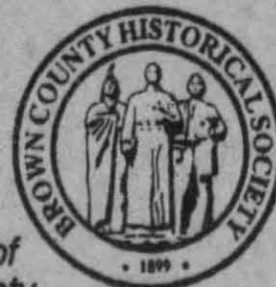
ish families made their way from the East Coast to the Midwest, where they established homes and businesses in a land that was similar, in terms of climate and terrain, to Germany.

A number of credible sources identify a Montreal-born military officer, John Lawe — whose mother was Jewish — and his uncle, Jacob Franks, as the first settlers in Northeastern Wisconsin with Jewish connections. Franks worked for Ogilvie, Gillespie and Co. and was headquartered on Mackinac Island, beginning in 1792.

Upon arriving in Green Bay in 1797, Franks and his nephew took note of the lucrative fur trade in the area and established a



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trading post.

Franks returned to Montreal in 1810, but his nephew remained in Green Bay. Lawe took over sole proprietorship of the trading post.

Lawe was a highly successful merchant. He is known to have traded with

Chief Oshkosh and joined the American Indian leader in an attack on the American fort at Mackinac.

Lawe expanded his interests in 1822 when he accepted an appointment as associate justice for the first court held in Brown

County. Thirteen years later, he was elected a member of the first Legislative Council of Wisconsin Territory.

Lawe also was an organizer and one of the largest stockholders of the Fox River Hydraulic Co., formed in 1836 for the pur-

pose of building a dam across the Fox River.

Area historians note it is difficult to be certain about Lawe's awareness of his Jewish heritage. Certainly, as the sole Jew in the territory, he had little

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Cnesses Israel Congregation

Aziel Kanter sits at a table with his family. Kanter came to Green Bay in the late 1890s and worked as a shochet (kosher butcher), taught Hebrew and chanted the liturgy. His home became the gathering place for Green Bay's small Jewish congregation.

# Jewish/Many fled here to escape political turmoil in Europe

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opportunity to express his religion. In fact, Lawe was instrumental in the establishment of Christ Church, the first Protestant Episcopal Church in Green Bay, founded in 1829.

When John Lawe died in Green Bay in 1846, he left behind several children and the respect of his adopted community, which later paid tribute by naming a street after him on what is today's Green Bay's east side.

The first group of Jewish families in Northeastern Wisconsin arrived sometime between 1850 and 1860.

Some were peddlers, then merchants of scrap iron, fur, hides, fruit and clothing. Some of their children carried on the family business, while others became doctors, teachers,

lawyers and dentists.

Orthodox Jew Aaron Rosenberg and his son, Jake, arrived in Green Bay in 1884. Left behind in Lithuania, awaiting money for their own steerage passage, were his wife, Blume, and three other children.

It is not recorded if the rest of the family were present for Jake's bar mitzvah, a special service denoting the entrance of a youngster into responsible Jewish life. But the event certainly testified to Aaron's devotion to his religion.

Orthodox law requires the presence of at least 10 men for the performance of the bar mitzvah ceremony. Because there were few Jewish men living in Green Bay at that time, this requirement presented a problem. Rosenberg passed the word to Jewish peddlers and

travelers that they should gather at his house on an appointed Saturday morning for his son's bar mitzvah.

The idea worked, and the first organized Jewish ceremony to be held in Green Bay took place in Aaron Rosenberg's living room.

As the number of Jewish families in Green Bay increased, Azriel Kanter was hired to be the shochet (kosher butcher), cantor (chanting the liturgy and teaching Hebrew to children) and also the official mohel.

The succeeding years saw the Jewish community continue to expand. The first full-time Hebrew school teacher, Zundel Altschuler, arrived in 1895.

And a tragedy that struck one summer day in 1898 led to

the formation of a recognized Jewish congregation in Green Bay.

Louis Baum was playing football when he apparently was stricken by acute appendicitis. Within hours, the teenager was dead, and the shocked, close-knit community mourned together. The closest Jewish burial site, however, was in Appleton, no small journey in the days before cars.

The decision to become a recognized Jewish congregation was made on the return trip from Appleton. A few days

later, in the room where the first bar mitzvah had occurred in Aaron Rosenberg's house, the leaders of the Jewish community gathered to work out the details.

A short time later, on Sept. 15, 1898, they went to the register of deeds office to file formal articles of organizations for Congregation Cnesses

Israel Synagogue of Green Bay.

*(Submitted by Bill Meindl)*